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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000775

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TREASURY FOR OFFICE OF AFRICAN NATIONS

E.O. 12598: N/A

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SUBJECT: GUINEA STRIKE: DAY TWO REMAINS CALM, GOVERNMENT PR EFFORT NOTED, BUT NOT VERY EFFECTIVE

REFS: A) CONAKRY 757, B) CONAKRY 717, C) CONAKRY 721

**¶11.** (SBU) Summary. Guinean support for the general strike remained relatively strong and peaceful on its second day. The government seems more prepared to handle the PR aspects of the strike, compared to the five-day strike that ended in March. While it is neither failing nor fading, this union effort appears to be in search of a spark. To date, there have been no formal negotiations between the government and the unions. EAC met to review situation (septel). End summary.

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KEY OBSERVATIONS FROM STRIKE'S SECOND DAY  
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**¶12.** (U) Based on contacts with sources and observation by Mission staff, it appears support for the strike has remained generally consistent with the strike's first day.

-- Taxis continue to operate and were noticeably joined on June 9 by the mini-buses used by many Guineans. Few of these vehicles appear to be full of passengers.

-- There continue to be no reports of violence associated with the strike throughout the entire country. Police presence on the streets of Conakry appeared lower than on Day 1.

-- Most businesses, banks, and large shops remained closed. At least one supermarket owner told an Embassy officer he was prepared to open, if his workers showed up. They did not.

-- Some informal market activity continues, with some roadside stands open and market women selling goods.

-- Major economic actors in the mining industry remain unaffected by the strike, although workers in gold mining regions of Upper Guinea are reportedly considering joining the effort.

**¶13.** (U) To date, the government and unions have not held formal negotiations. It is possible that there are meetings behind closed doors. The government has presented its case through Guinea's sole broadcaster, state-run Guinean Radio and Television. In local languages, the government is repeating its declaration regarding the strike (ref A). Announcers are also exhorting Guineans in their ethnic languages to go back to work. Based on observations noted above, these PR efforts have not yet been effective in breaking the strike. They show an improvement over

government efforts to control perceptions of the last strike.

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KEY POINTS HEADING INTO THE WEEKEND  
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¶ 14. (SBU) Heading into the weekend, there are several scenarios that bear watching.

¶ 15. (SBU) Electricity: Guineans will be watching the World Cup matches this weekend, and generally, the government tries to provide electricity during these times. A power failure during the African Cup earlier this year sparked a demonstration at a local electric utility office in Conakry that resulted in rock-throwing and gendarmes opening fire on the crowd. A repeat of that sort of problem could touch off a wider demonstration. Electrical problems are possible, even likely, given Guinea's fragile power grid and aging infrastructure. President Lansana Conte has reportedly donated generators to youth centers in Conakry to help ensure that people can watch the games.

¶ 16. (SBU) Political Parties: So far they have remained silent, and their supporters have not taken to the streets. Meetings between the unions and political parties were planned for today. We have not yet heard any outcomes of these discussions. The political parties also hold regularly scheduled meetings on Saturdays. In the coming days, it is possible that the parties could initiate some sort of action in support of the strike or to advance their own agendas.

¶ 17. (SBU) Business Activity: It is possible more businesses

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and shops will choose to open given the peaceful security situation. If so, increased commercial activity could further diminish support for the strike. It is also possible that a renewed action by fuel distributors (refs B and C) could cut off supplies to service stations, forcing cab drivers off the road, and bringing what economic activity that is occurring to a standstill. The transporters set June 10 as their deadline for government concessions. We are not aware of any formal meetings or an agreement between the parties.

¶ 18. (SBU) Comment. The conduct of the strike so far has shown a government better prepared to respond to the security, public relations and other challenges posed by the latest strike. However, the government remains unable to address the main economic grievances of the unions and their supporters. The unions are maintaining the strike, but they have not succeeded in completely shutting down the country.

McDONALD